



CITY AND COUNTY OF SAN FRANCISCO IMMIGRANT RIGHTS COMMISSION

San Francisco Immigrant Rights Commission Full Commission Meeting

September 12, 2022 at 5:30 pm PDT

Online: <https://ccsf.webex.com/ccsf/onstage/g.php?MTID=e5c829190f4f71c8104ffc3d8b34807b3>

Phone: 1-415-655-0001 / Event number: 2484 432 8910

Note: As authorized by California Government Code Section 54953(e) and the Mayor's 45th Supplement to her February 25, 2020 emergency proclamation, this meeting will be held remotely without providing a physical location. Members of the Immigrant Rights Commission will participate and vote by video. Members of the public may observe the meeting and provide public comment online. View [instructions](#) for providing public comment.

1. **Call to Order and Roll Call**

Chair Kennelly called the meeting to order at 5:38 p.m.

Present: Chair Kennelly, Vice Chair Paz, Commissioners Enssani, Khojasteh (left at 7:16 p.m.), Latt, Obregon, Ricarte, Ruiz, Souza, Wang (left at 6:49 p.m.).

Not present: Commissioners Gaime, Rahimi.

OCEIA staff present: Acting Director Whipple, Commission Clerk Shore, Administrative Assistant Alvarez, Operations and Grants Administrator Chan, Senior Spanish Language Specialist Cosenza, Senior Chinese Language Specialist Li, Policy and Civic Engagement Officer Noonan, Senior Communications Specialist Richardson.

2. **Ramaytush Ohlone Land Acknowledgment**

This item is to allow the Commission Chair to acknowledge that the Commission is on the unceded ancestral homeland of the Ramaytush Ohlone who are the original inhabitants of the San Francisco Peninsula.

Chair Kennelly read the land acknowledgment statement.

3. **General Public Comment**

This item is to allow members of the public to address the Commission on matters that are within the subject matter jurisdiction of the Commission and that do not appear on today's agenda.

Chair Kennelly provided an overview of the program for today's hearing and invited OCEIA staff to make announcements. OCEIA staff provided information in English, Spanish and Cantonese about how to access interpretation services during the meeting and how to make

public comment.

There was no general public comment.

4. Action Item: Resolution to Allow Teleconferenced Meetings

(Discussion/Action)

a. Adoption of resolution making findings to allow teleconferenced meetings under California Government Code Section 54953(e)

Discussion and possible action to approve a resolution making findings to allow for continued remote meetings due to the COVID-19 emergency. Explanatory Document: [Findings Resolution](#)

Commissioner Souza motioned to approve the resolution, seconded by Commissioner Wang. Chair Kennelly called for public comment and there was no public comment on this item. The motion was approved unanimously by the 10 Commissioners present.

5. IRC Hearing: Immigrant Perspectives on Housing in San Francisco

a. Introduction (Chair Kennelly and Commissioner Souza)

(Information)

This item is to allow the Chair and Commissioner Souza to introduce today's hearing and provide an overview of the purpose of the hearing. The Commission has convened this hearing to ensure that immigrant perspectives are included in the discussion about San Francisco's housing future, and that housing in San Francisco is affordable and inclusive of immigrant communities.

Chair Kennelly welcomed attendees, discussed the purpose of the hearing, and invited Commissioner Souza to make remarks. Commissioner Souza noted that the COVID-19 pandemic has disproportionately impacted immigrant families, leading to job losses and housing insecurity, and emphasized the importance of focusing on equity and measurable solutions. Chair Kennelly thanked Commissioner Souza for her leadership and introduced the invited speakers.

b. Invited Speakers

(Discussion)

This item is to allow the Commission to hear from invited speakers on the topic of today's hearing.

City Departments

1. Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD) and HOPE SF

Eric Shaw, director of the Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development (MOHCD), provided an overview of his department's work. MOHCD manages community development investments in tenant and housing stabilization, placement of people into Below Market Rate and affordable housing, and production of 100% affordable housing. It has about 11,000 units of housing in the pipeline, and it takes about five years for housing to get developed. State funding will increase the number of units by about 600. MOHCD helps people apply for its housing lottery system, funds attorneys for tenants impacted by eviction, and provides emergency rental assistance for those impacted by a missed paycheck or other challenges. During the pandemic, MOHCD helped administer state assistance in multiple languages. The state distributed \$160 million to 16,000 households. MOHCD does not require proof of citizenship for housing and does not track immigration status. It provides \$11 million in grants to 16 community-based organizations in San Francisco.

2. San Francisco Housing Authority

Linda Mason, general counsel and chief people officer with the San Francisco Housing Authority, provided an overview of the Housing Authority's programs. Its low-income housing program encompasses several units in North Beach, and Plaza East. Both are managed by private property managers. Its housing choice voucher program (also known as Section 8) is a larger transactional program in which the Housing Authority determines the percentage of rent residents pay based on their income. It includes tenant-based vouchers (which allow subsidies to follow an individual), project-based vouchers (which allow subsidies to stay with the unit), Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing, and HOPE SF sites Potrero, Sunnysdale, Hunters View, and Alice Griffith.

She also provided information on noncitizens who are eligible for Section 8 housing. Those who are not eligible can still access Section 8 housing if they are part of a "mixed" family that includes eligible and non-eligible individuals. The rental subsidy is pro-rated based on the number of eligible individuals in the household. About 125 families are considered "mixed" families out of about 15,000 households in the Section 8 program. San Francisco has helped these families cover rental costs during the pandemic. State and city COVID-19 rent relief efforts also helped keep families in their homes. The Housing Authority submitted requests for rent relief for all families living in subsidized housing who got behind on their rent.

3. Planning Department

Shelley Caltagirone, project manager of the Planning Department's Housing Element, provided an overview of the City's 2022 housing plan update known as the Housing Element of the General Plan. The Planning Department produces the update every eight years to show the state how the city will meet its regional housing allotment. This year, for the first time, the Housing Element will center racial and social equity, and identify housing as a human right.

She stated that one of the City's needs is better data collection on whom affordable housing

programs are serving. The Planning Department's analysis shows that immigrants face greater challenges accessing affordable housing due to language barriers and limited financial resources, as well as less access to and knowledge of local services. Immigrant households made up 75% of overcrowded households in 2018 in San Francisco, and linguistically isolated households made up 55% of rent burdened households.

The Planning Department partnered with over 20 community-based organizations to host almost 100 conversations across the city, including 11 in-language events in Cantonese and Spanish. They heard concerns about income and document requirements that become barriers to housing assistance. The Planning Department is restructuring to allocate staff as community navigators in the Tenderloin, Mission, Chinatown, and Bayview Hunters Point.

The Housing Element recommends minimizing evictions using direct rental assistance, capping single room occupancy (SRO) rent at 30% of household income, identifying who is underserved by Below Market Rate programs and removing disparities, creating programs targeting highest-need groups, investing in neighborhoods where immigrants seek services when they arrive, as well as well-resourced neighborhoods for those moving to new areas.

Over the next eight years, San Francisco needs 46,000 affordable housing units, 33,000 of which are at the two lowest income levels. These targets are triple the targets of the last cycle, when only about half of the affordable housing needed was achieved. She noted that this will take unprecedented investment and changes to improve the regulatory process.

Chair Kennelly thanked the speakers and invited Commissioners to ask questions. Speakers responded to questions from Commissioner Souza about metrics, Vice Chair Paz about the small-site acquisition program, Commissioner Obregon about current emergency rental assistance programs and the number of noncitizen San Franciscans using Section 8 vouchers, and Commissioner Ruiz about housing for those released from detention centers.

Community-Based Organizations

4. Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA)

Norma Garcia, policy counsel and director of advocacy for the Mission Economic Development Agency (MEDA), provided an overview of her organization's work. MEDA's community real estate program, launched in 2014, includes 1,067 affordable housing units and does not collect data on how many are immigrants. MEDA's housing opportunities program helps clients qualify for Below Market Rate rental and for-purchase units. Since 2021, it has served approximately 5,558 individuals. Of the 831 clients who responded to its survey, about 81% identified as immigrants.

She identified several challenges immigrants face in accessing affordable housing, including lack of supply, continued affordability, and the end of the eviction moratorium. The Mission District is ground zero for the increase in evictions, with the Latino population

disproportionately impacted by homelessness. Potential solutions include viewing housing equity as synonymous with health equity, prioritizing language access, funding food pantries and wraparound services, supporting and expanding shelters for unhoused SFUSD students, supporting small business and workforce development programs, and addressing the pandemic's impact on credit ratings.

5. Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC)

Malcolm Yeung, executive director of the Chinatown Community Development Center (CCDC), provided an overview of his organization's housing programs. These include tenant counseling and organizing, single room occupancy (SRO) resident services, developing, managing and operating affordable housing, and preservation of housing including small site acquisition and single room occupancy (SRO) units. CCDC estimates that immigrants make up 50% of residents in its own housing programs, and close to 90% of those it works with.

Director Yeung said he has counted 28 evictions since June, mostly due to nonpayment of rent during the pandemic. He noted that the growing wealth divide, which deepened during the pandemic, has led to an increase in Area Median Income (AMI). As a result, many low-income San Franciscans cannot afford housing slated for those earning 50% of the AMI. He stressed the importance of supporting affordable housing for extremely low-income families, working with the Housing Authority on project-based vouchers, and continuing mobile Section 8 vouchers for families so they can move out of SROs.

6. Housing Rights Committee

Alicia Sandoval, Spanish-speaking lead counselor with the Housing Rights Committee, stated that tenants' concerns about evictions increased dramatically during the pandemic. The number of calls her organization received in Spanish increased from about three calls per day before the pandemic to 10 to 20 calls per day. People who are not aware of their rights have started self-evicting, and many are now homeless and sleeping in their cars. She recalled one woman who did not speak English and moved into her car after her landlord came to her door every day. The Housing Rights Committee has created tenant associations to help educate people about their rights. She emphasized the need for emergency housing and real affordable housing for those who earn less than 50% of the AMI.

7. African Advocacy Network

Adoubou Traore, executive director of the African Advocacy Network, discussed the perspectives of Black immigrants who are low-income and limited English proficient. He noted that statistics are not available for Black immigrants. Director Traore surveyed AAN clients about housing, and 100% said they were excluded from affordable housing and did not know how it worked. He noted that Black immigrants often feel invisible and discussed the

importance of creating a system to help people without making them feel that they are being assisted. He noted the importance of equity and language access in affordable housing.

8. Glide Memorial Church

Erick Arguello, advocacy manager for Glide's Center for Social Justice, discussed challenges including crowded conditions, buildings not properly maintained, a years-long waitlist, limited supply, a cumbersome process, not enough navigators, technological barriers, qualifications designed for traditional incomes, and lack of housing for extremely limited income individuals. He pointed to several potential solutions, including public-private partnerships, prioritizing extremely low-income individuals, land-backed property, using public properties for truly affordable housing, and ensuring that seniors remain in their homes.

Chair Kennelly thanked the speakers and invited Commissioners to ask questions. Speakers responded to questions from Commissioner Obregon on what San Francisco should prioritize, and Vice Chair Paz on how to find and build more affordable housing given the cost of building new units.

c. Public Comment

This item is to allow members of the public to address the Commission on matters related to the topic of today's hearing.

Chair Kennelly invited members of the public to make public comment.

1. Efrain Barrera

Efrain Barrera of MEDA discussed the impact of the housing crisis on students and families and the importance of a partnership between the City and community organizations.

2. Laura Daza

Laura Daza of MEDA underscored the urgency expressed by several speakers, especially for seniors and those on a fixed income.

3. Ivan Corado-Vega

Ivan Corado-Vega of the Latino Task Force noted that the pandemic exacerbated existing disparities in housing, and discussed the alarming incidence of self-displacement and the need for a meaningful intervention strategy.

4. Gabriel Medina

Gabriel Medina of La Raza Community Resource Center discussed the need for land

acquisition and investment in affordable housing, using public land for public good, reestablishing resettlement houses, providing stable housing for asylum seekers, and outreaching to community organizations.

5. Sharon Herrera

Sharon Herrera of the Latino Task Force discussed the challenges undocumented immigrants face navigating systems, and noted that the Latino Task Force is engaged in conversations with landlords to transition families out of homelessness.

6. Francisco Herrera

Francisco Herrera of Dolores Street Community Service's Day Laborer Program and Women's Collective described the experience of one of their members, an essential worker who was denied access to space for essential workers, had to live on the streets, and was murdered. He stated that many of their members are living in their cars and on sidewalks. Master tenants are evicting their housemates. Many tenants do not know they have rights. He called for a robust campaign. He said he was not surprised to hear that the Latino community doubled in homelessness because he has witnessed it.

7. Larisa Pedroncelli

Larisa Pedroncelli of United to Save the Mission discussed increasing preservation strategies to keep elder community members in their homes, and emergency housing for families who are living in their cars. She said even those who know their rights are self-evicting out of fear; many come from counties where when they say get out, you get out.

8. Everardo Velazquez Pureco

Everardo Velazquez Pureco of the Latino Task Force said as a career coach, he sees people every day asking for jobs and housing. Even with a decent job, many cannot afford housing. He noted that affordable housing is not affordable for immigrants who make minimum wage. He said people need information in their language, and training on how to access resources.

d. Closing Remarks

(Information)

This item is to allow the Chair and Commissioner Souza to provide brief closing remarks on today's hearing.

Chair Kennelly thanked the speakers and members of the public for their insight into the challenges facing immigrants and ideas of solutions to make housing more affordable and inclusive of immigrant communities. Commissioner Souza thanked the speakers and provided

closing remarks. Vice Chair Paz noted several of the common themes of the hearing, including the importance of working together, utilizing public-private partnerships, and promoting the sense of urgency of this issue.

6. Action Item: Approval of previous minutes

(Discussion/Action)

a. Approval of April 11, 2022 Full Commission Meeting Minutes

b. Approval of May 9, 2022 Full Commission Meeting Minutes

Discussion and possible action to approve the minutes of the Immigrant Rights Commission's Full Commission meetings of April 11, 2022 and May 9, 2022. Explanatory Documents: [IRC Full Commission Draft Minutes 4.11.22](#) | [IRC Full Commission Draft Minutes 5.9.22](#)

Commissioner Souza motioned to approve the two sets of minutes, seconded by Vice Chair Paz. Chair Kennelly called for public comment and there was no public comment on this item. The minutes were approved by the eight Commissioners present.

7. Chair/Vice Chair Reports

(Information)

a. Chair and Vice Chair's Updates

This item is to allow the Chair and Vice Chair to summarize actions of the Executive Committee.

Chair Kennelly thanked Commissioners for a successful Immigrant Leadership Awards event in June, and provided several updates from the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee wrote a letter to City College of San Francisco in support of Cantonese, English as a Second Language (ESL), and other programs that serve immigrant students. She thanked Commissioner Wang for bringing the matter to the Commission's attention. The Commission also has published its annual report. Chair Kennelly thanked OCEIA staff for their work writing and designing the report. The Executive Committee approved the report and it has been sent to Commissioners and City officials, and is available on the Commission's website.

b. Rescheduling IRC October Full Commission Meeting

This item is to allow the Chair to reschedule the date of the Commission's October meeting due to the holiday on October 10, 2022.

Chair Kennelly rescheduled the next Full Commission meeting to October 17, 2022. She called for public comment and there was no public comment on this item.

8. Staff Reports

(Information)

a. Director's Updates

Report on OCEIA and IRC activities and announcements. This item allows the Director to provide brief updates on activities and announcements. If the Commission would like a full report, we can place that matter on the agenda for a future meeting.

Acting Director Whipple provided an update on OCEIA's recent activities. OCEIA and the Immigrant Rights Commission partnered with the San Francisco Pathways to Citizenship Initiative to host a press conference at City Hall in honor of Citizenship Month. Chair Kennelly and Vice Chair Paz spoke, and the event was covered in mainstream and ethnic media. Acting Director Whipple reminded Commissioners that four Board-appointed Commissioners are up for reappointment. He also provided policy updates on immigrant parent voting, DACA, and public charge, noting that OCEIA and HSA issued a joint statement on the public charge rule.

Chair Kennelly called for public comment and there was no public comment on this item.

9. Old and New Business

(Information)

This item is to allow Commissioners to provide updates on items the Commission has previously discussed, and to introduce new agenda items for future consideration by the Commission.

Commissioner Souza asked about the language access hearing, and Chair Kennelly asked her to reach out to OCEIA staff to schedule the committee meeting. The Board of Supervisors has not yet scheduled its hearing on the Language Access Ordinance report.

10. Adjournment

Chair Kennelly thanked everyone for today's hearing and adjourned the meeting at 8:22 p.m.

